



CRP Mid-Contract Management

Conservation Practice Job Sheet

(647)

Ohio - Natural Resources Conservation Service

June 2004

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) policy requires CRP participants starting with Signup 26 to perform management activities as part of their approved conservation plan. These management activities are designed to ensure plant diversity and wildlife benefits, while ensuring protection of the soil and water resources. Typically, mid-contract management activities are conducted between the 4th and 7th year of the contract; however, on land with existing cover, management activities can begin as soon as technically feasible. This job sheet describes the management activities to be performed on your land based on an evaluation of your CRP cover. With the information contained in this job sheet as well as other information provided to you by the NRCS, you will need to implement the listed activities. These activities need to be done according to the specifications and plans given to you. These actions are requirements of the CRP and failure to perform them when needed may result in contract violation. Any changes or deviations from the plan given to you must be discussed with NRCS before you proceed.

PURPOSE OF PRACTICE

For CRP practices with grasses, legumes and forbs, research has shown that typically 3-4 years after establishment the site becomes dominated by thick growth of the grasses or undesirable broadleaf plants. To ensure wildlife habitat benefits in these sites, the stand is evaluated to see if some sort of management will help restore the site to a better habitat condition. This may mean creating more open space for wildlife to move, breaking up stands that are too uniform or encouraging the growth of other desirable species. Once the management activity is performed the habitat should be better for several more years.

HOW RECOMMENDATIONS ARE DEVELOPED

Once a field is determined to be eligible for mid-contract management NRCS staff or a technical service provider (TSP) will evaluate the field. They will check the condition of the stand; determine what species are present; what the relative amounts of the different species are; and whether or not it is providing good habitat for local wildlife species. Based on this evaluation, the person evaluating the stand will then decide if any action is needed to improve the stand. If it is still in good condition, no action may be necessary. If the field needs some improvement, there are a variety of activities that can be used to improve the condition of the stand. Depending on the landowner's capabilities and desires as well the exact problem to be addressed the NRCS or TSP will develop a plan that uses the appropriate activities to address the concerns. The recommendations are developed in accordance with standards found in Section IV of the Ohio Field Office Technical Guide and CRP policy.



Existing Cover Conditions	Date
Type	%Cover
Grasses	
Forbs	
Trees/Shrubs	
Bare Ground	
Other	

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The following are some of the management activity options open to Ohio CRP participants:

LIGHT DISKING

Light disking breaks up thick grass stands to allow annuals, wildflowers and legumes to become established, as well as providing some bare ground to help small animals move about, find seeds and provide dusting sites. If light disking is indicated as a needed management activity, the following are some of the specifics of applying this practice:

- Make multiple passes with a disk about 4" deep
- Leave about 50% of the soil bare
- Disking should be done across the slope or on the contour
- Disked areas should be no wider than 50'; in between, leave undisturbed areas 100-200' wide
- Rotate the disturbed areas across the field
- The best time to disk is in late summer or fall

PRESCRIBED BURNING

Prescribed burning reduces litter and provides bare soil for the germination of desirable plants. It also can help control unwanted weeds and brush. A separate job sheet related to prescribed burning may be prepared. If prescribed burning is indicated as a needed management activity, the following are some of the specifics of applying this practice:

- Prescribed burning must be done according to an approved plan by qualified personnel
- If burning during the primary nesting season, no more than ½ of the field should be burned
- Burning can be done every 3-5 years
- All necessary permits must be obtained in order to carry out a prescribed burn
- Establish a firebreak around the area to be burned

HERBICIDE APPLICATION

The use of a selective herbicide can control unwanted vegetation whether that is grass, broadleaf weeds or brush. This allows more desirable plant species to become established. If herbicide application is indicated as a needed management activity, the following are some of the specifics of applying this practice:

- All herbicides application must be done in accordance with the product label
- Spot spraying is preferred in order to reduce impacts to other species
- Spraying may done in strips no wider than 50 feet; in between, leave unsprayed strips of 100-200 feet
- Rotate disturbed areas across the field
- Leave an unsprayed filter strip along water bodies

INTERSEEDING FORBS, LEGUMES, NATIVE GRASSES

It may be necessary to seed plant species that are missing from the stand and are not likely to establish naturally. These species will improve the diversity of the stand and improve its value for a variety of wildlife. If interseeding is indicated as a needed management activity, the following are some of the specifics of applying this practice:

- Areas to be seeded will likely require one of the above disturbance activities prior to seeding
- Seeding may be done in installments over the entire acreage
- Follow the listed rates, timing and seeding methods given to you

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PRESCRIBED GRAZING

Domestic livestock may be used to alter the plant community on the CRP acreage. This may provide improved plant diversity and variation in plant height and density. If prescribed grazing is indicated as a needed management activity, the following are some of the specifics of applying this practice:

- Grazing must be done in accordance with a plan to emphasize wildlife habitat
- Areas may not be overgrazed; a light grazing intensity may be used
- The CRP acreage may not be grazed during the primary nesting season

PRESCRIBED HAYING

Similar to mowing, haying on a regular basis may negatively impact a stand. However, haying, if used correctly may benefit a stand by favoring desirable species and removing excess plant litter. If prescribed haying is indicated as a needed management activity, the following are some of the specifics of applying this practice:

- Haying must be done in a way that emphasizes the improvement of wildlife habitat
- Cutting height should be at least 4 inches for cool season grasses and 8 inches for warm season grasses
- The CRP acreage may not be hayed during the primary nesting season

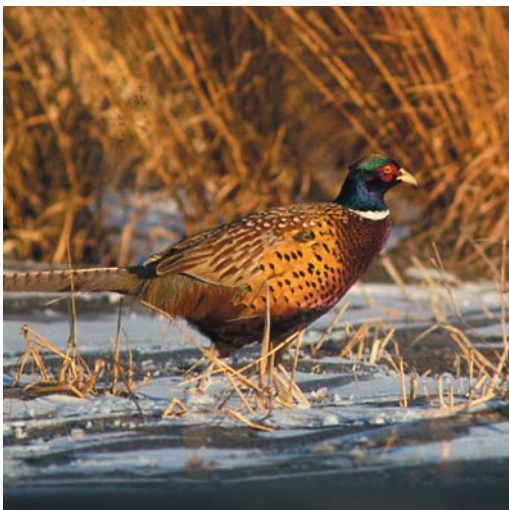
PRESCRIBED MOWING

Typically mowing does not provide the type of benefits the other disturbance activities do. However in some cases it may be the best method to use to control brush or provide increased stand diversity. If prescribed mowing is indicated as a needed management activity, the following are some of the specifics of applying this practice:

- Annual mowing is not allowed
- No more than 1/3 of the area may be mowed in one year; rotate the mowing on a 4-5 year cycle
- Strips 20-40 feet wide may be mowed; alternate these with unmowed areas at least 100 feet wide
- Mowing residue should be shredded or well distributed to prevent deep litter accumulation

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Periodically inspect the site to see if the practices are having the desired effect. Correct any significant sources of soil erosion. Contact USDA service center if needed for advice or assistance.



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Consider using a variety of management activities, if possible, to provide a wider range of habitat conditions.

Consider the erosion potential of any practice; timing and location of practices can help reduce the erosion. Keep disking on the least erodible portions of the field.

The presence of problem weeds such as Canada thistle, Johnsongrass or reed canarygrass may make disking less desirable. Consider spot spraying, spot mowing or burning in these areas.

A wide variety of wildlife may use these areas. Consider the impacts and benefits to other species when planning practices.

If it has been a while since you have been in the field, be wary of tile blowholes, fallen tree limbs, groundhog holes and other hazards that may have developed.

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CRP Mid-Contract Management – Specifications Sheet

Landowner _____ Date _____

Prepared By _____

Tract Number _____ Field Numbers _____ Total Acres _____

Original Cover/CRP practice _____ Year Established _____

Wildlife species to be benefited _____

Purpose of management activity _____

Activities Planned (check all that apply)

_____ No Action No action needed at this time; maintain cover in current condition; monitor for changes

_____ Disking Date _____ Method _____ Passes per strip _____
Width of disked strip _____ Width of undisked strip _____
Additional specifications _____

_____ Herbicide Target species _____ Timing _____
Product _____ Rate _____
Preparation prior to spraying _____
Additional specifications _____

_____ Mowing Date _____ Method _____ Height _____
Width of mowed strip _____ Width of unmowed strip _____
Additional specifications _____

_____ Seeding Species to seed/rate (#/ac.) _____
Method of seeding _____
Date _____ Site preparation _____
Additional specifications _____

_____ Burning Burn according to developed prescribed burn plan (separate document)

_____ Haying Date _____ Area to be hayed _____
Additional specifications _____

_____ Grazing Graze according to prescribed grazing plan (separate document)

Additional Specifications

Landowner Signature

Date